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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program implemented to raise the awareness of the dramatic increases of reported academic cheating, to influence the attitudes of the targeted students towards cheating, and ultimately to reduce incidents of cheating in the targeted classrooms. The targeted populations consisted of middle school students in growing middle-class urban and suburban communities in northeast Illinois. Problems of increasing academic cheating were documented through data from national reports, educational institutions, and the targeted schools in the project. Analysis of the probable causes in the literature revealed that although there are multiple causes of cheating, four categories are most prevalent: (1) societal value of extrinsic over intrinsic rewards; (2) lack of clarity of the definition of cheating; (3) consequences for cheating that are not severe; and (4) societal acceptance of cheating. A review of the solution strategies suggested by the literature yielded dozens of solutions. The one chosen for the project was selected because the extensive research base supported the approach. The researchers chose an action plan that implemented a character-education plan that clearly defined cheating and its consequences and adjusted students' attitudes about cheating. Postintervention data indicated that incidents of observable cheating decreased by more than 50% after the action plan had been completed. Also, students' awareness of the consequences of cheating increased. Postintervention data also suggested that students are less likely to cheat when a clear definition is communicated and the consequences for cheating are clearly stated. Four appendixes contain teacher and student surveys, an observation checklist, and parent consent letters for the study. (Contains 27 figures and 21 references.) (Author/SLD)

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Reducing Incidents of Cheating in Adolescence

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program implemented to raise the awareness of the dramatic increases of reported academic cheating, to influence attitudes of the targeted students towards cheating, and to ultimately reduce incidents of cheating in the targeted classrooms. The targeted populations consisted of middle school students in growing middle-class urban and suburban communities located in northeast Illinois. Problems of growing academic cheating incidents were documented through data from national reports, educational institutions and the targeted schools in the project.

Analysis of probable causes in the literature revealed that although there are multiple causes of cheating, the researchers found the following four categories to be the most prevalent: societal value of extrinsic over intrinsic rewards, lack of clarity on the definition of cheating, consequences for cheating are not severe, and the societal acceptance of cheating.

A review of the solution strategies suggested by the professional literature yielded dozens of solutions. Our solution was chosen because the extensive research base found in the literature strongly supported the effectiveness of such approaches. The researchers chose an action plan that implemented a character-education plan that clearly defined cheating and its consequences and adjusted the students' attitudes about cheating.

Post-intervention data indicated that incidents of observable cheating decreased by over 50% after the Action Plan had been completed. Also, students' awareness about the consequences for cheating increased. Post-intervention data also suggested that students are less likely to cheat when a clear definition is communicated and the consequences for cheating are clearly stated.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

Problem Statement

Academic cheating is defined as representing someone else's work as your own. It can take many forms: from sharing another's work to purchasing a term paper or test questions in advance, to paying another to take a test or do the work for you. The general perception of teachers is that cheating has become widespread. This has been witnessed in the majority of 11-16 year old students in the targeted classrooms. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes teacher surveys, student surveys, teacher observation, journal entries, and discipline records.

Immediate Problem Context

Site A is a two story brick building containing grades pre-kindergarten through eighth, with a total enrollment of 591 students. The ethnic makeup of the school population is 69.5% Caucasian, 25.4% African-American, 4.9% Hispanic and 0.2% Asian-Pacific Islander. Within the total school population, 0.0% have limited English proficiency.

Of the school's population of 591 students, 29.3% come from low-income households. The school's population takes 30% of its students from outside its attendance area who have voluntarily transferred from other schools. The majority of these students are bused to school. Site A has an average daily attendance rate of 94.0%. The student mobility rate is 8.3% and

there is a 0.3% chronic truancy rate.

Site A has grade levels ranging from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. There are 170 students with disabilities which comprise 26.4% of the student population. The school serves students with emotional, mental and physical handicaps and learning disabilities along with the general student population. Accelerated courses are provided for those students who are identified as performing above grade level.

The school has two half-day pre-kindergarten classes for students identified with special needs. These students have a variety of physical and cognitive handicaps which require early intervention skills. There are two half-day general education kindergarten classes. Each grade level has two regular education classrooms. There are four self-contained special education classrooms. The average class size are 24.5 in kindergarten, 26.0 in first grade, 30.5 in third grade, 30.5 in sixth grade and 31.0 in eighth grade (School Report Card, 1999).

There are specialized classes located throughout the school. These classrooms service students who have been identified as educable, trainable, severe and profound, and learning disabled. These students receive special services such as occupational therapy, speech therapy and hearing impaired services.

The curriculum includes the subjects of mathematics, science, social sciences and language arts courses. Language arts includes all reading, literature and English courses. Students also receive instruction in art, computers, music and physical education.

Site A has many incentive programs for students to succeed. Each classroom teacher selects a student of the month, who is recognized school-wide. Each quarter, the honor roll is printed in the monthly newsletter. Students who score at or above grade level in both

mathematics and reading on standardized tests receive a trophy at the end -of- the- year honors assembly.

The Local School Council (LSC) is an elected governing body comprised of teachers, administrators, parents and community members. The LSC decides local policy, supports principal and staff, approves and monitors School Improvement Plan (SIP), as well as the school budget.

Site A is part of a large urban district. The average teaching experience within the district is 14.8 years. The percentage of faculty members with a bachelor's degree is 54.0% and the percentage with a master's degree or above is 45.1% in the district. The average teaching salary within the district is $48,879.

The district spends 50.0% of its income on instruction. It also spends 1.0% on general administration, 39.1% on support services, and 9.9% on other expenditures. Instructional expenditure averages $4,718.00 per pupil (School Report Card, 1999).

Site B is an elementary school located in a suburban community adjacent to a large urban area. The site is part of an elementary district consisting of seven schools. It contains grades kindergarten through eighth. The total school population is 487 students.

The sites ethnic make-up is as follows: 86.9% White, Black, 11.7% Hispanic,1.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0% Native American. Of the total school population 7.8% are considered low-income, and 9.9% have limited English proficiency. The school has a 95.2% attendance rate with no chronic truancy. The mobility rate is 38.1%.

The school staff consists of one principal, 18 regular education classroom teachers, three cross-categorical special education teachers, four special classroom teachers including music, art,

library and physical education. The staff also includes 11 special services staff including Learning Resource, English as a Second Language, Reading specialist, Speech therapist, social worker and certified aides. All other special education services are provided to the district by a special education cooperative. The office staff consists of one full-time secretary and two part-time office staff. Average teaching experience is 18.6 years, with 55.2% of the staff holding a Bachelors Degree and 44.8% holding a Masters Degree or above.

Site B is a one-story u-shaped facility. The primary grades are located in one wing and intermediate and junior high grades occupy the other. Grades six, seven, and eight constitute the Junior High. There are two of each grade in a departmentalized setting consisting of a Language Arts block, Math, Science and Social Studies.

There are many incentive programs implemented in the Junior High. They include Student of the Month, which recognizes students for excellence in academics, effort or citizenship. Perfect Attendance is rewarded. There is an honor roll for students obtaining a grade point average of 3.0 or higher and a high honor roll for those students with 3.75 or higher. There is a year-end luncheon for these students as well as quarterly recognition. There is an eligibility program in which students need to maintain good conduct and a grade point average of 1.0 or higher in order to participate in extra-curricular activities. There is also an awards assembly at the end of the year to recognize student achievement in a variety of areas.

Extra-curricular activities include basketball, volleyball, cheerleading, track and field, chess club, newspaper club, and student council.

There are programs to help at-risk students. Every student receives an assignment notebook. There is also an after-school study helps program three days a week.

Parent communication is highlighted by a monthly newsletter. Parent contact is 93.8%, this includes parent/teacher conferences, parent visitation, and written and telephone communications.

Site C is a junior high school located in a suburban community adjacent to a large urban area. The site is the only public junior high school in this suburb. The total school population is 504 students. 249 students are in the 7th grade and 210 students are in the 8th grade. The school staff consists of 32 full-time classroom teachers, 5 special resource teachers/specialists, and 7 support staff. The school also hosts the districts early childhood and pre-kindergarten program, which accounts for the remaining student enrollment of 55 students. 55% of the students enrolled are male and 45% are female. The racial/ethnic composition of the school is 86% White, 6% Hispanic or Latino, 5% Black or African American, and 4% Asian. The school has witnessed a significant increase in enrollment in the last 10 years, opening a number of classrooms that had been 'closed'. Site C operates as s junior high school with an integrated middle school philosophy. The school provides a culture of high academic standards in a nurturing, supportive atmosphere that individualizes instruction to meet the unique needs of all students. The school is a unified system of instruction providing inclusive equal educational opportunities through co-teaching, clustering and integrated learning Site C supports the district's technology plan as evidenced in the strong commitment to engaged-learning.

The school staff consists of 32 full-time classroom teachers, five special resource teachers/specialists, and seven support staff. Site C is a three-story building with 28 classrooms, a cafeteria, and a gym. Activities include: a newspaper, Declamation Team, Project Tree (a

gifted program), National Junior Honor Society, and many sports such as: basketball, volleyball, cheerleading and track.

The Surrounding Community

Site A is located on the southwest side of the nation's largest Midwestern city. This large urban area is subdivided into neighborhoods. This area was incorporated into the city in 1907. School A's neighborhood has a population of 17,227 residents. It is considered an urban middle-class area. The median income was $58,148 and the median home value was $116,900 according to the figures (Chicago Tribune Website,1999).

The area surrounding the school consists of single family homes, apartment buildings, several churches, a parochial school, a high school, a private university, and a business district. There is a wide variety of commercial and public transportation services in this area. These include local bus lines and rail services. A large park is centrally located within the neighborhood and provides a wide variety of recreational programs. There is a large branch of the city's library as well as a cultural arts and theater center.

The ethnic make-up of this area is 96.5% Caucasian, 1.2% African-American, 1.9% Hispanic, and 0.4% Other. The median age is 39.1 years with an average of 12.9 years of school completed. The community is viewed as a stable middle-class neighborhood that has property values increasing. Many city employees reside there. Retail area improvements are being subsidized by a city-funded local development corporation (Chicago Tribune Website, 1998).

Site B's district is under the leadership of a superintendent, and assistant superintendent, a director of student services, a business manager and a computer specialist located in a district office. The operating expenditure per pupil is $5,919.

Site B is located in a suburban city with a population of 27,643. The median family income is $53,152 and 9.3% of households fall below poverty level. Single-family housing makes up 82.9% of all housing and 17.1% is multi-family. The racial distribution in the community is White 94.3%, Black 0%, Hispanic 4.4% and Other 1.3%. The community is considered an upper-blue collar community. Median years of school completed is 12.5 years. In addition to the seven public elementary schools and one public high school there is one catholic elementary school and two catholic high schools located in the city.

Site C is located in a suburban city with a population of 21,000 residents. The median family income is $54,840. The average household size is 2.62 persons, with a median age of 39.1 years.

National Context of the Problem

The practice of cheating in schools has increased dramatically over the past thirty years (Schab, 1991). As sighted in a 1998 University of Kentucky study conducted by Anderman, Griesinger, and Westerfield, evidence indicates that cheating increases significantly in the adolescence and middle school years. In a 1998 nationwide poll of over 20,000 middle and high school students taken by the Josephson Institute of Ethics (JIE), seven out of ten students admitted to having cheated on a test (Bushweller, 1999). Another study found that the nation's highest achievers who are recognized in the *"Who's Who Among American High School Students, 1998"*, 80% admitted to cheating on the exam. This is a ten-point increase since the question was first asked fifteen years ago. Of those who admitted cheating, 95% said they were never caught (Bushweller, 1998).

Cheating is being viewed as a survival skill in a competitive world. Many educators say the increase in cheating is due to an erosion of ethics in a self-centered culture (Bushweller, 1998). Another area of research suggests that there is a link between motivation and cheating (Anderman,et al., 1998). Other educators point to habits that students attain through years of working together in cooperative learning situations. Others blame teachers who do not discipline those caught, or they blame over-indulgent parents who refuse to hold students accountable. More attention has been given to violence and drugs (Bushweller).

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) has implemented a national ad campaign to discourage academic cheating. ETS has set up a web site and a toll free number to assist educators, parents and students, addressing this widespread problem.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the prevalence of cheating by middle-school students, surveys were given to students and middle-school teachers on their perceptions of the extent of cheating in the classroom. Survey consent forms were sent home for parents/guardians to sign (see Appendix D). An Observation Checklist was also developed to record observable cheating in the researchers' classrooms.

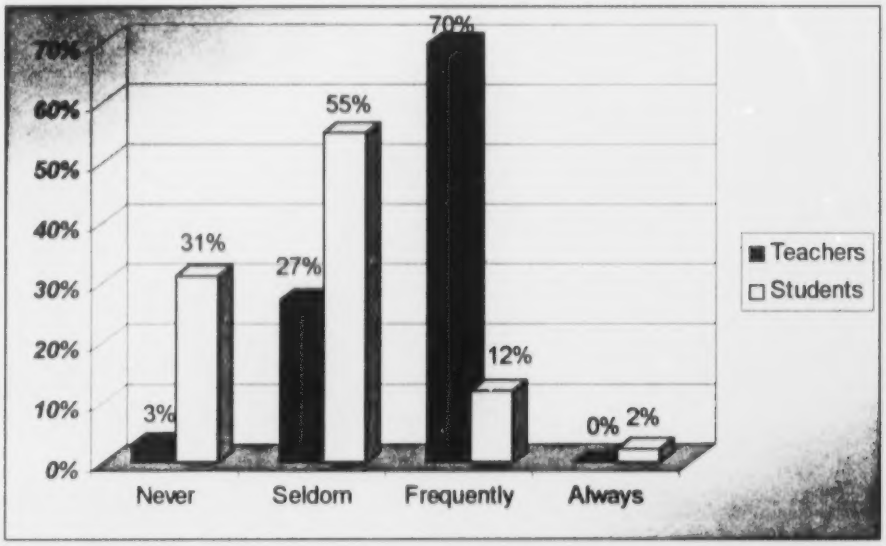

Figure 1. Teacher and student perceptions of cheating.

The first five graphs represent the results of surveys given to the targeted group of students and their teachers. These were surveys of teachers' perceptions about cheating and

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students' perceptions about cheating. Figure 1 compares the percentage of targeted students who admitted to cheating, along with their teachers' perceptions of how often they cheated. Based on the total number of survey responses, 86% of the students stated that they never or seldom cheated, while 14% admitted to cheating frequently or always. The targeted groups' teachers on the other hand responded that 30% of their students never or seldom cheated, and that 70% of their students cheated frequently.

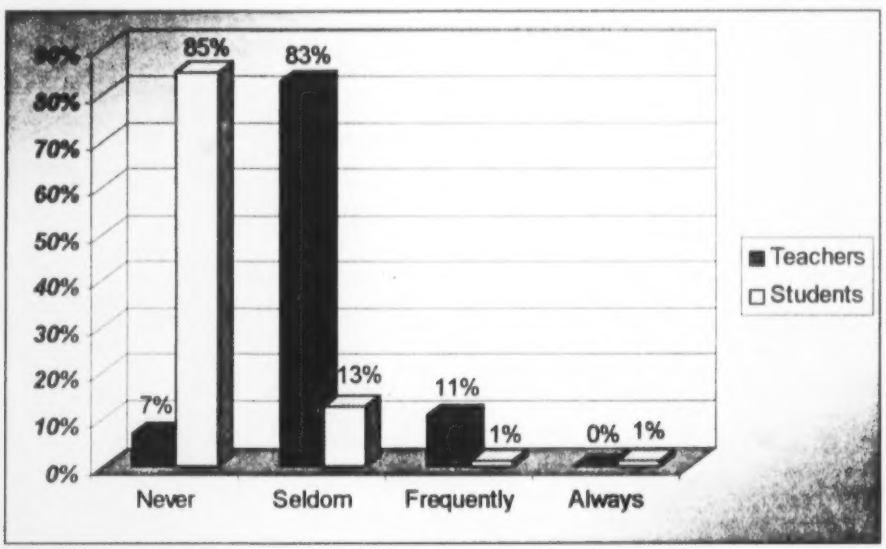

Figure 2. Students use cheat sheets when taking a test.

Figure 2 compares students and teachers perceptions of how often students used cheat sheets during tests. Students stated that 85% of them never use cheat sheets, whereas the teachers surveyed stated that only 7% never used them. Only 13% of the students admitted to seldom used cheat sheets during tests, compared to their teachers who felt that 83% of their students seldom used cheat sheets during tests.

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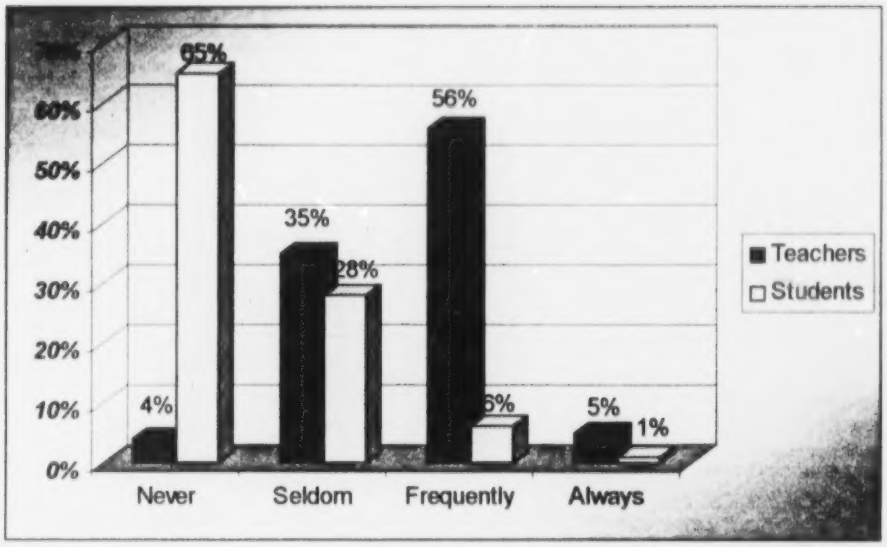

Figure 3. Students copy answers from other students during a test.

Figure 3 compares teachers' and students' perceptions of how often students copy answers from other students during tests. Teachers stated that approximately 60% of the targeted students frequently or always copied answers, compared to the 7% of students who admitted to frequently or always copying answers during tests. Teachers stated that nearly 40% of their students never or seldom copied answers during tests, whereas 93% of the students said they seldom or never copied answers from other students during tests.

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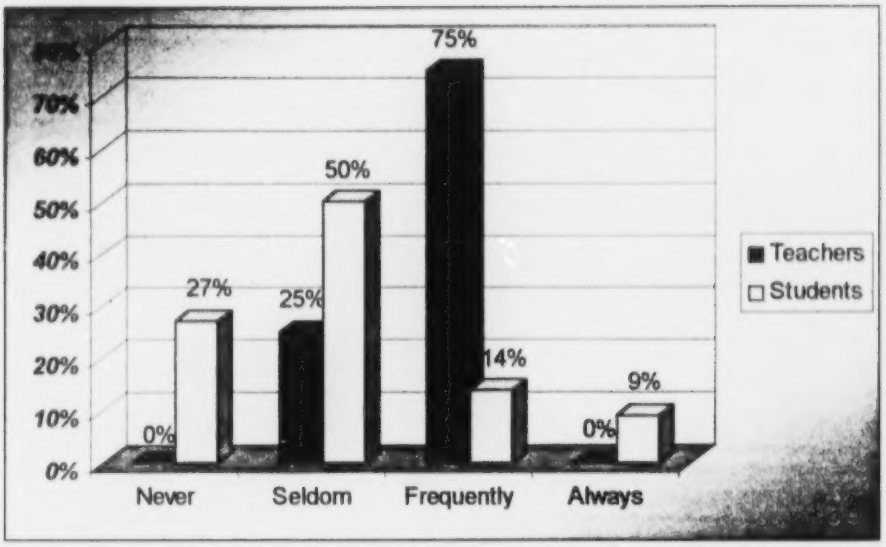

Figure 4. When students do not understand the assignment, they get answers from friends.

Next, the students and teachers were asked to indicate how often students would get the answers from a friend when they did not understand an assignment. Figure 4 shows that 77% of the students never or seldom got answers from a friend. Twenty-three percent of them admitted to frequently or always getting answers from a friend when they did not understand the assignment. Teachers surveyed stated that 75% of the targeted students frequently or always got answers from their friends.

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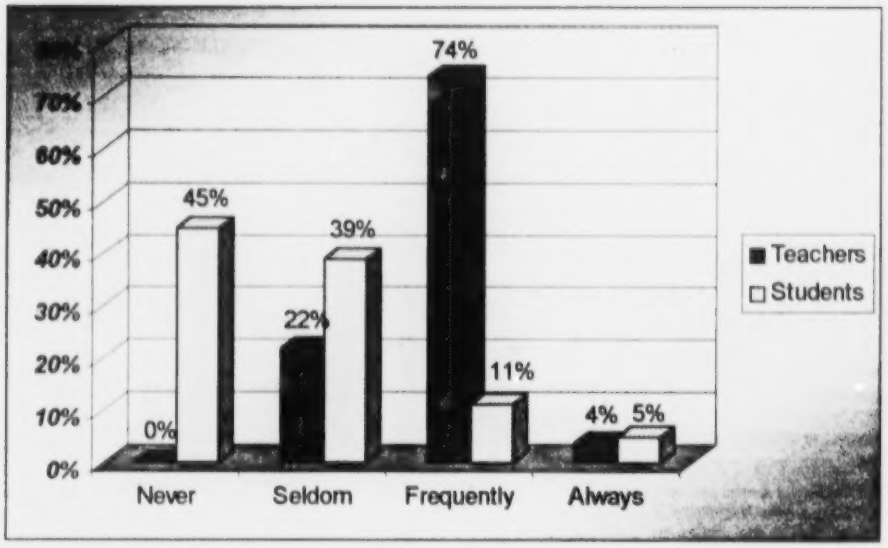

Figure 5. Students copy class work from other students.

The survey then asked if students copied class work from other students. Figure 5 shows that 84% of the students responded that they seldom or never copied class work and 16% did so frequently or always. Teachers stated that 78% of the targeted students copied class work from other students frequently or always.

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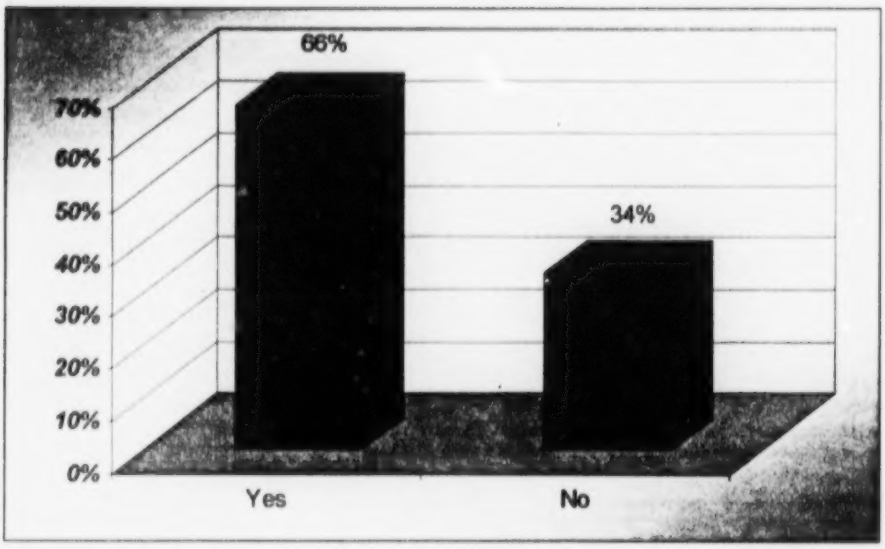

Figure 6. Cheating is prevalent.

The results of the Survey of Teachers' Perceptions About Cheating are displayed in Figures 6. Teachers were asked to respond with either yes or no, based upon their individual experiences in their classrooms with the targeted students. When asked if they felt if cheating was prevalent in their classrooms, two-thirds answered yes as shown in Figure 6.

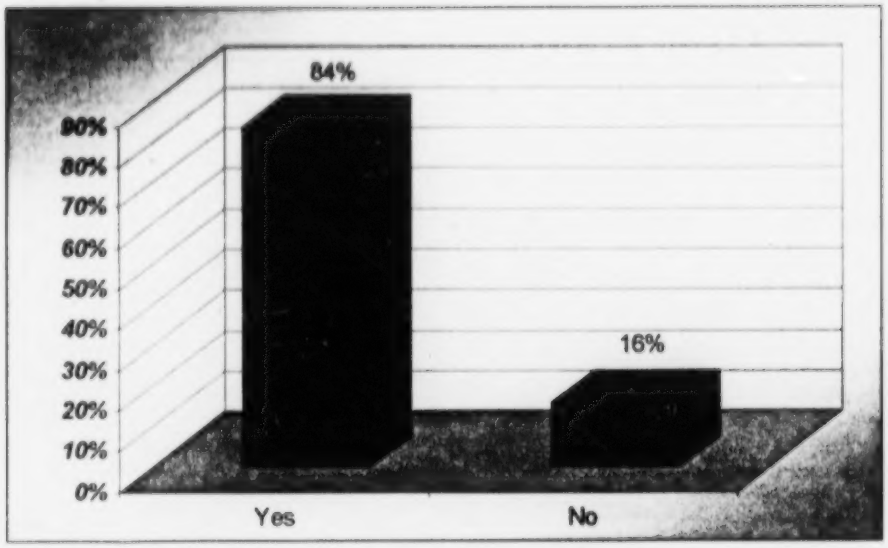

Figure 7. Teacher has adjusted teaching practices due to cheating.

Teachers were asked if they had adjusted their teaching practices due to cheating. Figure7 shows that 84% of the teachers surveyed have adjusted their teaching practices.

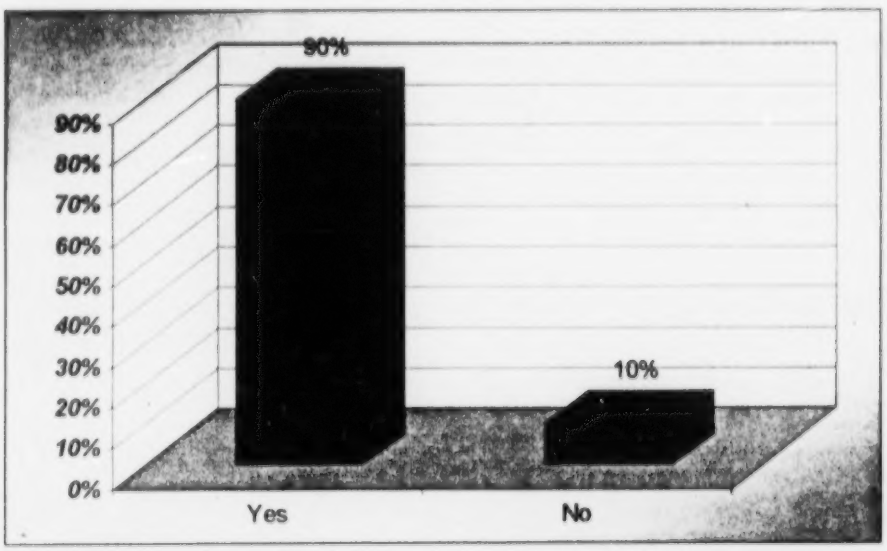

Figure 8. Teacher has discussed what constitutes cheating in the classroom.

Next, the teachers were asked if they have discussed what constitutes cheating in their classrooms. Based on survey results, as shown in Figure 8, 90% of the teachers have discussed what constitutes cheating with their students. Nearly all of the teachers surveyed, 97% of them, stated that they had discussed the consequences of cheating with the targeted students, as displayed in Figure 9.

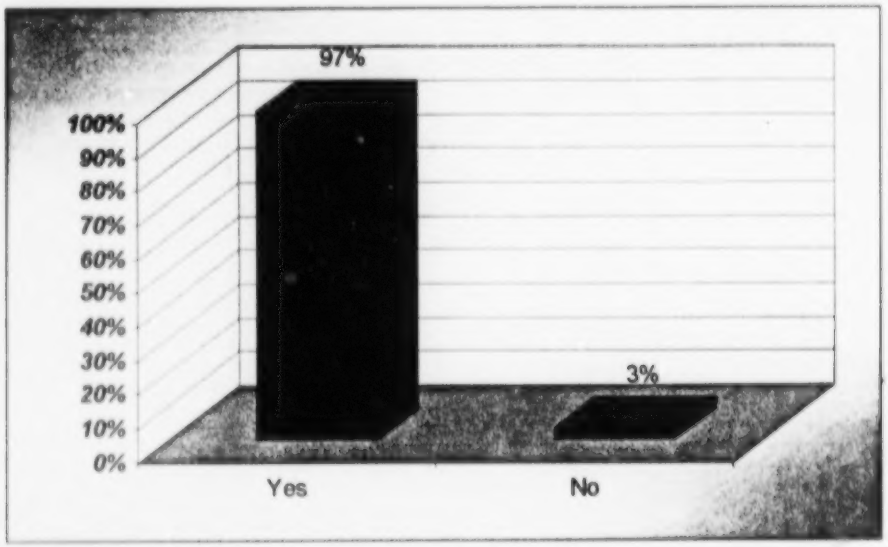

Figure 9. Teacher has discussed consequences of cheating.

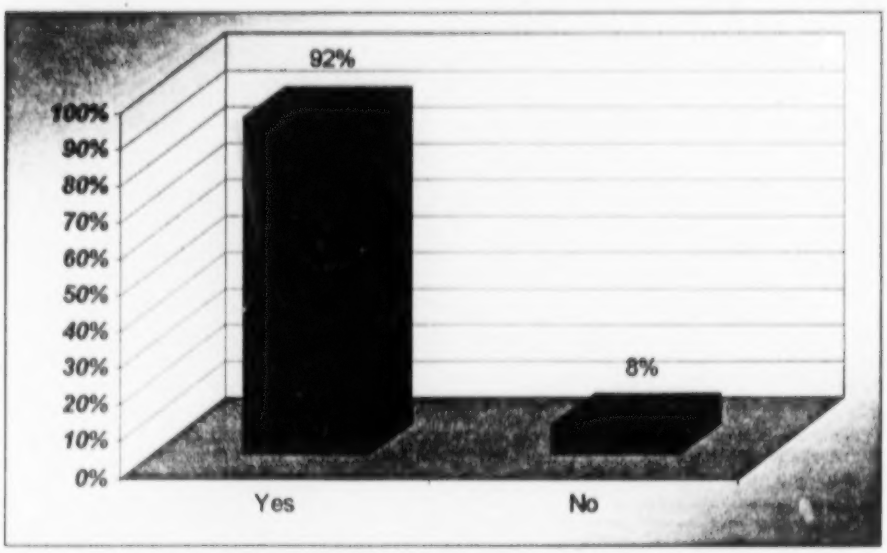

Figure 10. Teacher follows through with consequences when cheating is observed.

Figure 10 shows that 92% of teachers surveyed follow through with consequences when they observed cheating in their classrooms.

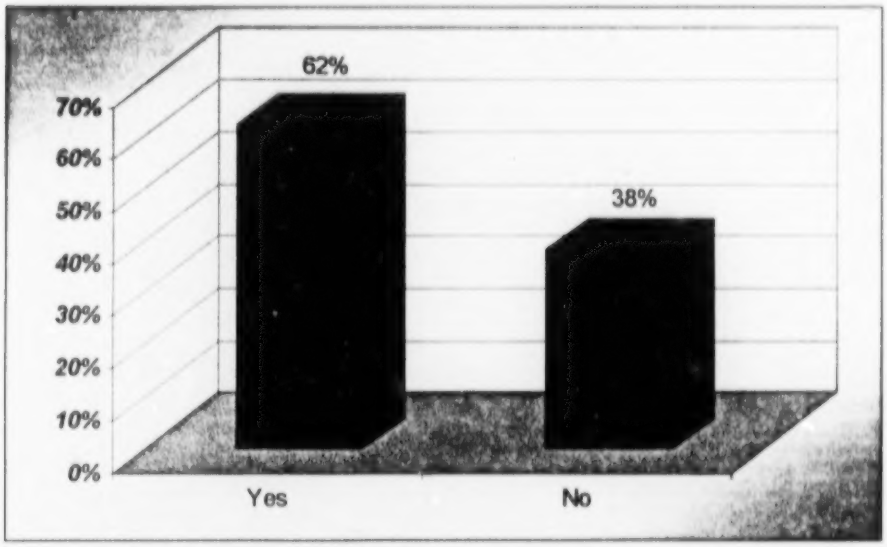

Figure 11. School policy regarding cheating.

In Figure 11, the bar graph illustrates the fact that over half of the teachers surveyed knew of a policy in place at their school regarding cheating. A third of the teachers stated that either there was not a policy at their school, or if there was one in place, they were unaware of its existence.

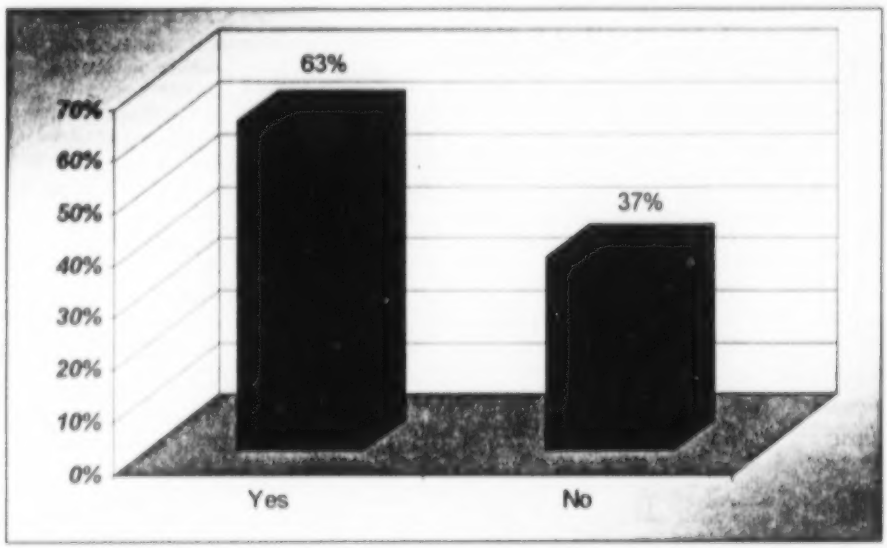

Figure 12. Cooperative groups contribute to confusion about cheating.

Figure 12 shows the percent of teachers who thought cooperative learning contributes to confusion about cheating. Well over half of the teachers' surveyed thought that cooperative learning does contribute to the confusion in students to whether they are just "cooperating" or whether they are cheating.

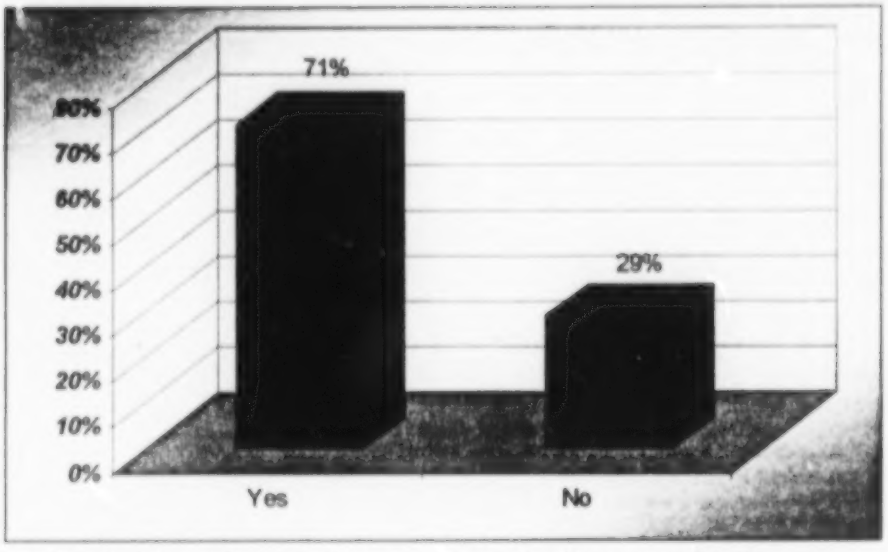

Figure 13. Student has refused to cheat even though others were cheating.

The percentage of students who refused to cheat, even though others were cheating, is illustrated in Figure 13. Two-thirds of the students surveyed stated they would not be pressured into cheating, while a third would cheat, or not refuse to cheat, if they saw others cheating. The majority of the students surveyed also stated they would not be victims of peer pressure.

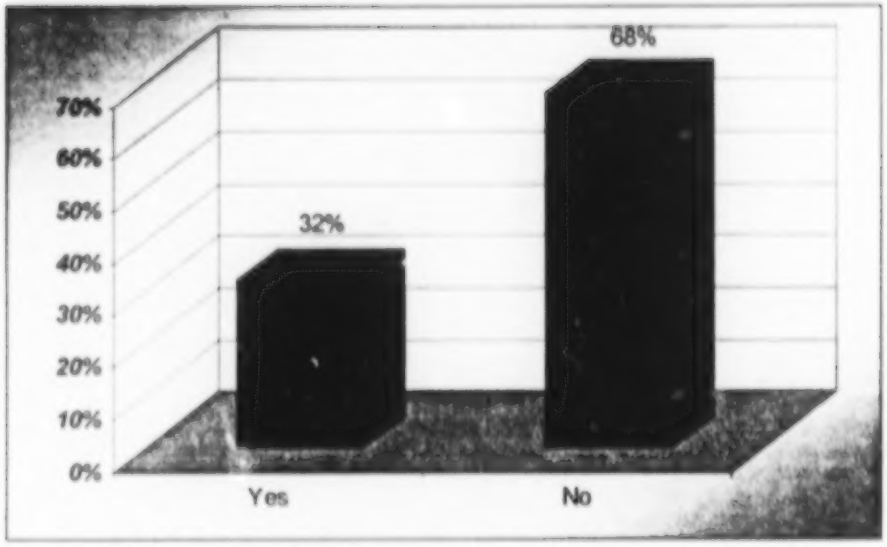

Figure 14. Student would be willing to cheat if it would improve their grade.

Figure 14 show that one-third of the students would cheat to improve their grades. This statistic is in line with the others in that, it shows that two-thirds of those surveyed would not cheat, even if it meant that they would get a higher grade.

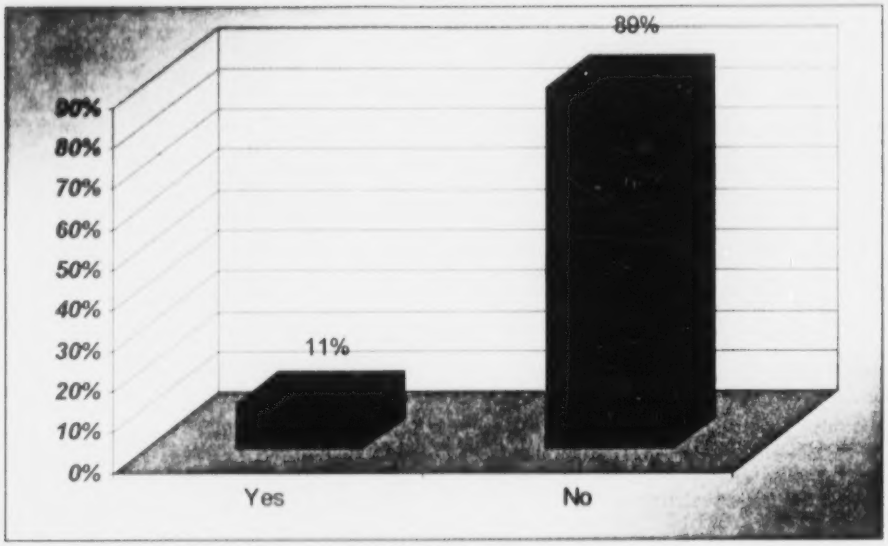

Figure 15. People who cheat are more likely to be successful.

Figure 15 illustrates the percentage of students who thought that people willing to cheat were more successful than those who did not cheat. One-tenth of the students surveyed thought that the cheaters were more successful. Close to ninety percent said that the people willing to cheat were not more successful. The students believe that cheaters do not prosper, they are just cheaters.

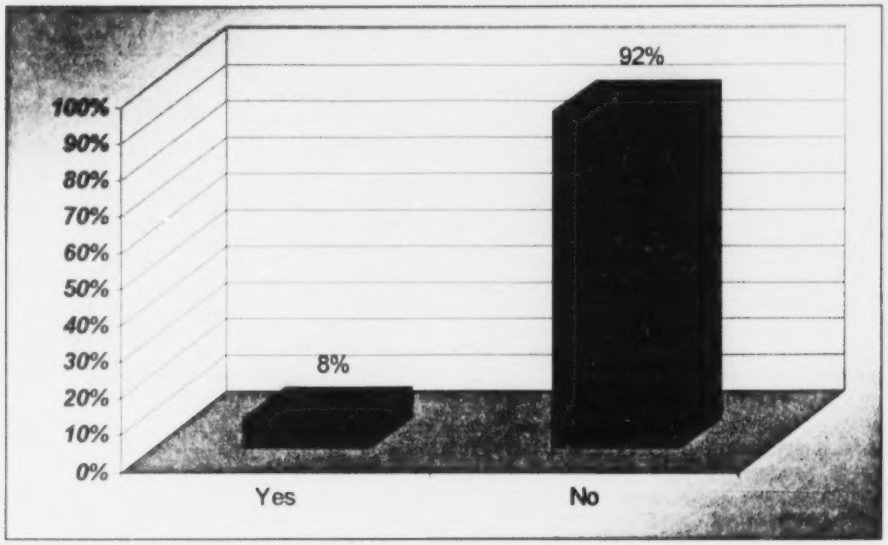

Figure 16. Parents would rather students cheat than get a bad grade.

The percentage of students who said that their parents would rather that they cheat than receive bad grades is illustrated in Figure 16. A small number said that their parents would rather that they cheat than get bad grades. Close to all of the students surveyed said that their parent would not want them to cheat in order to get higher grades.

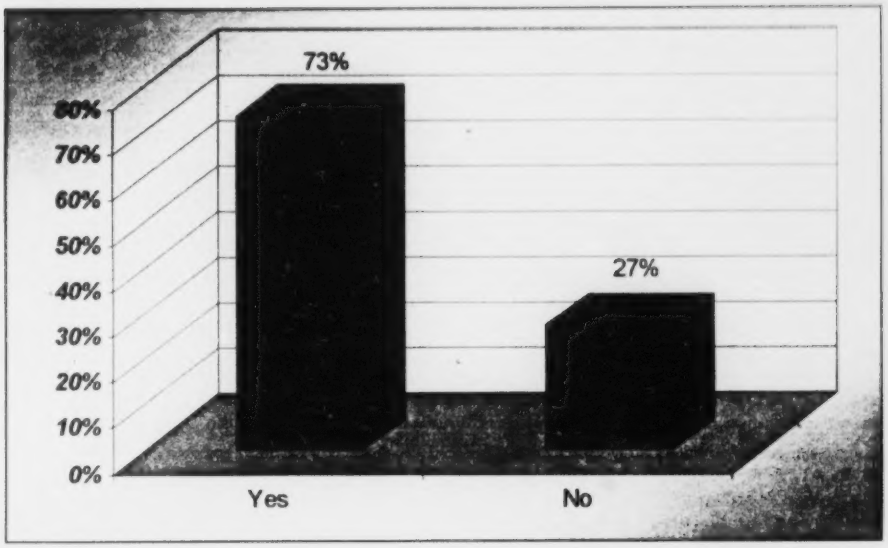

Figure 17. Cheating hurts your character.

Figure 17 illustrates that three-quarters of the students surveyed did believe that cheating hurt one's character. This statistic correlates to the other data that suggests that only one-fourth of the students surveyed did cheat. Consequently, these same students did not feel that this hurts their character.

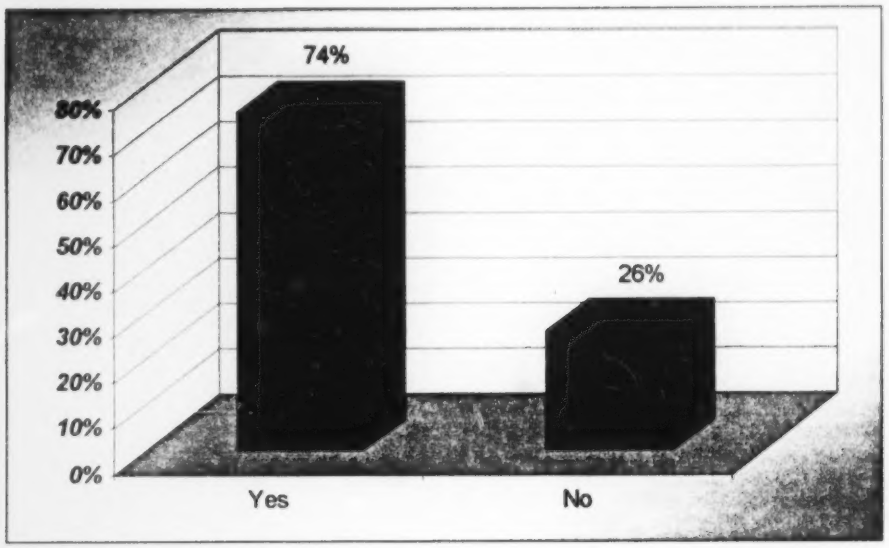

Figure 18. It is very serious to cheat on a test.

Figure 18 shows the percentage of students who thought that cheating on a test was serious. Again, three-fourths of the students surveyed believe that cheating on a test was serious, while the same one-fourth did not find that cheating on a test to be serious. The data continues to show consistently that approximately one in four students not only cheats, but they also do not think that it is serious to cheat on a test.

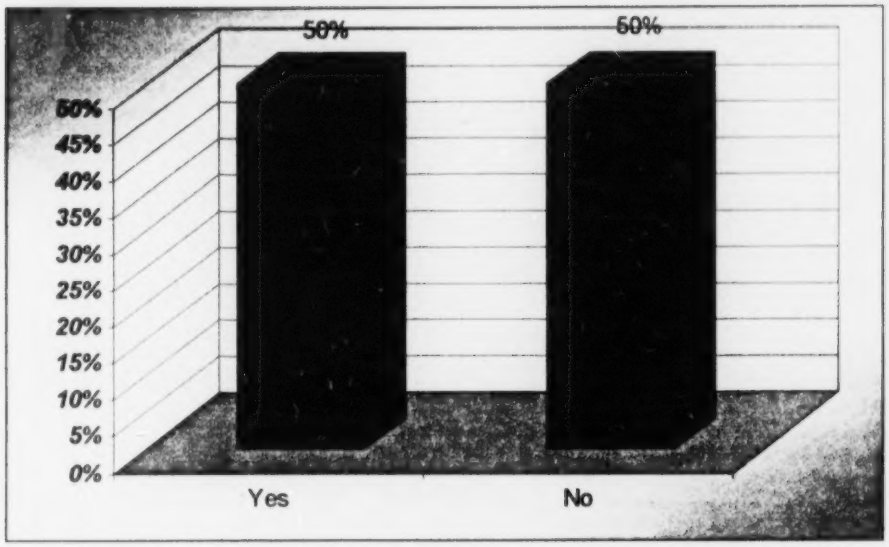

Figure 19. It is very serious to cheat on class work.

In Figure 19, half of the students surveyed said that it was not serious to cheat on work given in the class. This result is surprising since the number of students who thought that cheating was wrong (i.e. 75%), has now dropped by twenty-five percent. The students did not believe that cheating on class work was serious. This may be directly related to the question of what cooperative learning in the classroom implies.

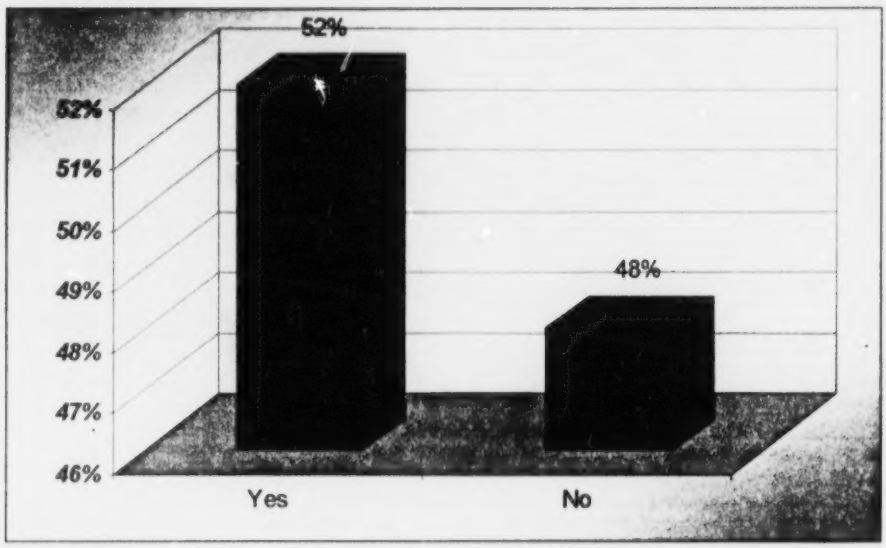

Figure 20. Cheating if you were sure that you would not get caught.

The percentage of students who would cheat if they were sure that they would not get caught is illustrated in Figure 20. Slightly over half of the students surveyed said that they would cheat if they knew for sure that they would not get caught. This raises the question of whether fear of being caught is the main reason that students choose not to cheat, or whether it is a sense of honor or integrity in their character.

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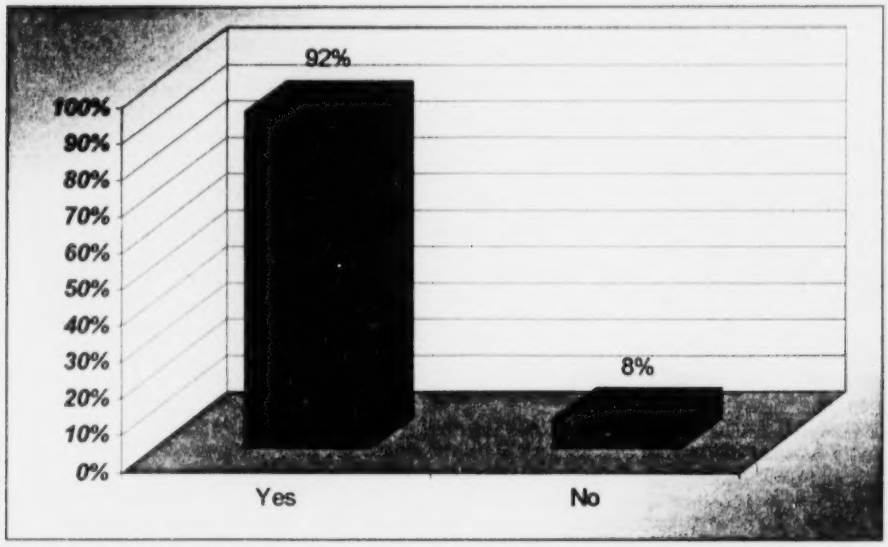

Figure 21. Student is aware of consequences for cheating in the school.

Figure 21 shows that almost all of the students surveyed knew of the consequences of cheating in their school. Less than a tenth of the students were unaware of the consequences. Since most of the students knew of a policy in place, and were aware of the consequences, this may have deterred some from cheating.

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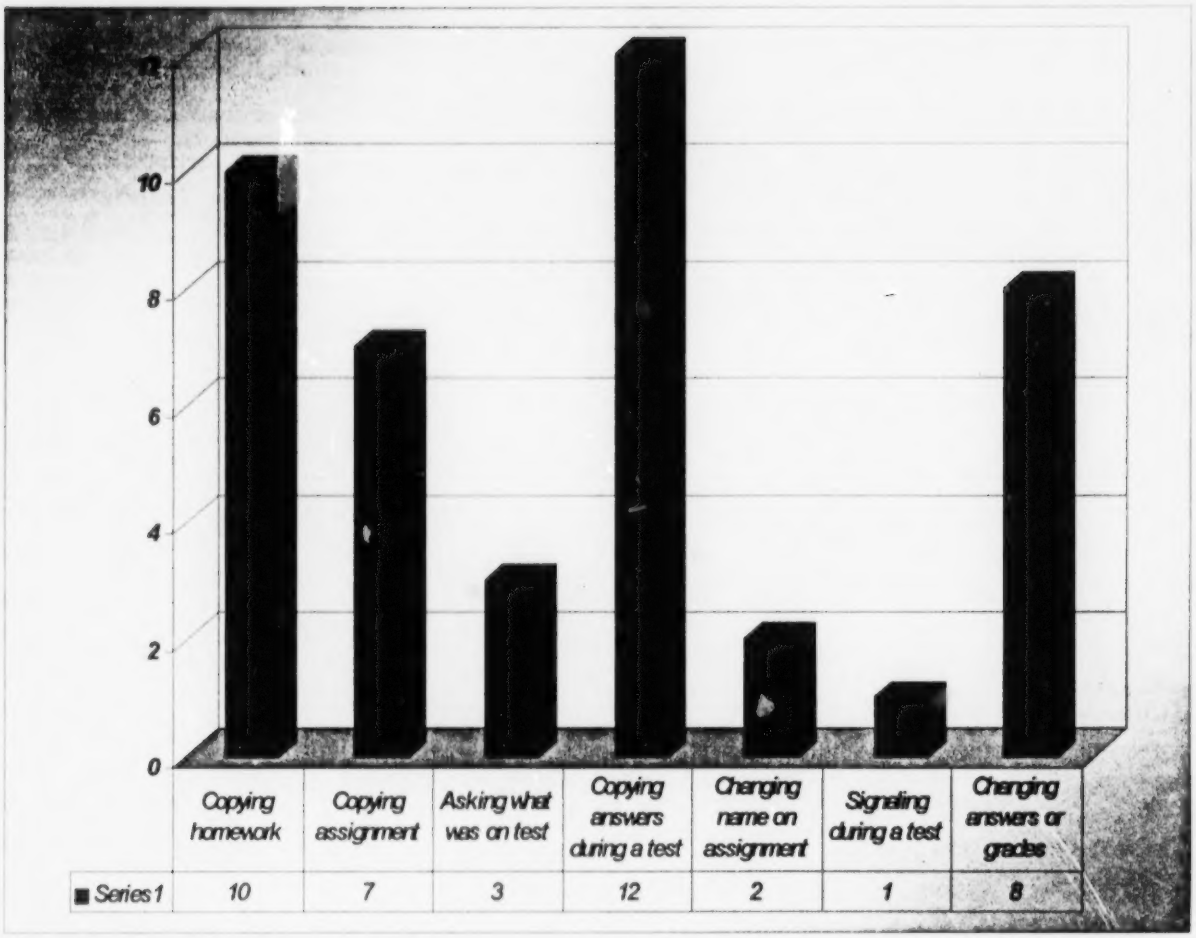

Figure 22. Observation checklist results.

Figure 22 illustrates the results of the researchers' observation checklist. The checklist was compiled from one week's worth of observation. The highest observed cheating incident was copying answers on a test. The researchers observed students looking at another person's paper twelve times during the week. The researchers also observed students copying homework, copying class assignments or changing answers quite frequently. Changing names on an

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assignment, asking what was on a test, and signaling on a test were observed with much less frequency.

Probable Causes

Site Based

According to the data collected by the researchers there is a definite cheating problem at all three sites. The data confirmed what the literature suggested are the underlying causes of cheating: lack of clarity about the definition of cheating, grades are valued more than acquiring knowledge, consequences for cheating are not severe, and an overall societal acceptance of cheating. The researchers found that there was somewhat of a discrepancy between teachers' opinions regarding cheating and students' opinions. Even though students admitted to cheating, they felt some cheating was serious and some cheating was not. They considered some cheating as really helping. This may be caused by the students' confusion about the idea of cooperative learning.

Literature Based

The literature suggests several underlying causes for the increase in cheating in the school setting. Some causes include: getting the grade is valued more than acquiring knowledge, extrinsic motivation is more important than intrinsic motivation, rules about cheating are ambiguous, the consequences for cheating are not severe and the societal acceptance of cheating.

According to Murdock (1999), students report that the desire for a better grade is one of their primary reasons for cheating. According to the Educational Testing Service (ETS)/Ad Council Campaign to Discourage Cheating (Hageman, 1999), grades rather than education have

become the major focus for many students. If the goal is to obtain a good grade, students will cheat.

The literature also suggests that when extrinsic motivation is more important than intrinsic motivation, cheating occurs more frequently. For too many students and their parents, getting the diploma, grant, or scholarship is more important than acquiring knowledge. The competition for admission into elite colleges has transformed the middle and high school years into a high-stakes race, where top students are competing for a spot (Kleiner & Lord, 1999). The pressure to succeed is driving students to consider extreme measures. Cheating is seen as a means to a profitable ends (Cheating is a personal foul, 1999).

According to Kleiner and Lord (1999), students are confused by what is meant by cheating. The rules are ambiguous. Kleiner and Lord ask, "When does collaboration end and collusion begin?" The definition of cheating has been clouded by years of working together in cooperative learning situations (Bushweller, 2000). According to Bushweller, students feel copying each other's work is "helping", not cheating. Kleiner and Lord state that schools are sending mixed messages. Some teachers say you can not work together, while others say that "two heads are better than one." Consequently, the question of where teamwork ends and cheating begins is not always clear, even for adults.

Kleiner and Lord further state that the major reason students cheat is that they do not get caught. Sizer, as quoted in Kleiner and Lord (1999), asserts that teachers with too-large classes, too-little time to get to know students or create new assignments, make cheating easy. According to Bushweller, some teachers would rather avoid the hassle of disciplining students who cheat. The literature suggests that the schools are fostering the problem by looking the

other way (Hageman, 1999). Schools have become tolerant of cheating with few punishments (Cheating is a Personal Foul, 1999). According to the literature, teachers are discouraged from punishing cheaters because of parental pressure (Bushweller, 2000). Also, some teachers are wary about pursuing cheaters due to the threat of legal action (Kleiner & Lord, 1999).

Cheating no longer carries the social stigma it used to. According to Bruinius (1999), 80% of the country's best students said they cheated to get to the top of their class, and more than half "didn't think cheating was a big deal." Cheating in school reflects a trend in society. The number of school-age cheaters is comparable to surveys of adults that show that 90% of adults admitting to telling a lie or violating traffic laws (1999.)

According to Labi (1999), students see how teachers cheat to keep their jobs. New York City's public school system was under investigation for cheating on the standardized reading exams. The investigation involved fifty teachers and two principals from 32 schools. According to a U.S. news poll, "One in four adults feel that they have to lie and cheat to get ahead, and it seems that this is communicated to children" (Kleiner & Lord, 1999).

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

The literature suggests numerous contributing factors to the rise in incidents of cheating in our schools. The problem has even perpetuated the creation of a national campaign being conducted by Educational Testing Service and the Ad Council to try inform the public about the cheating "epidemic" (Hageman, 1999). The campaign is called "Cheating is a Personal Foul" and has a toll free number and web site. Their aim is to discourage academic cheating (Bruinius, 1999). The literature suggests many different solutions to combat this problem.

One such solution is to make expectations regarding cheating clear. Research shows that in schools where teachers discuss academic integrity and outline unacceptable behaviors regarding cheating, incidents have declined (Kleiner & Lord, 1999). According to Singhal and Johnson, teachers should periodically review and clarify definitions of cheating, for the teacher's benefit as well as the students'(Evans & Craig, 1990). McCabe, Klebe and Butterfield (1999) state that an effective way to reduce cheating is to clearly communicate expectations regarding cheating to students. According to Bushweller (1999), parents also need to be made aware of the rules and consequences so that when a teacher needs to contact them about a cheating incident, they will be more supportive because they have been previously notified about the policy in place in the school.

Schools where an honor code is instituted have significantly reduced the incidences of cheating (Kleiner & Lord, 1999). In honor code institutions, the focus is on integrity and students taking on the responsibility for maintaining it (McCabe, et. al., 1999). The focus is on community values, communication and mutual responsibility. Students in honor code schools feel the same pressure as all students, but they do not use this pressure to justify cheating. One school has tried to reduce cheating by instituting a Legion of Honor. This list is comprised of students who do not cheat, do not have discipline referrals, have good attendance, and have passing grades. The list is posted and sent home to parents. It also reflects well on a student's college application (Bushweller, 1999).

Students will be discouraged to cheat if consequences are severe enough. Punishments should be swift and consistent. Schools have trouble when one student is punished and one is given a second chance (Bushweller,1999). Evans and Craig (1990) found that one of the most effective tactics for reducing incidents of cheating is the proactive teaching measures that reinforce the definition, types and ethical implications of cheating. Teachers need to allow students to take ownership in developing rules and consequences. When students are part of the process they are more likely to follow them. Evans and Craig also contend that students feel when they have a voice in the class they are being treated more fairly.

Teachers need to take responsibility for reducing cheating in the classroom. Teachers need to make it difficult to cheat. Teachers should not give the same tests year after year (Bushweller, 1999). Multiple versions of a test also reduce cheating (Kleiner & Lord, 1999). Test monitoring is also important. Teachers should never leave the room (Bushweller, 1999).

Furthermore, teachers should monitor students at all times. They should not grade papers when a test is being given (Kleiner & Lord, 1999). According to Schab (1991), when students were asked how to curb cheating, they recommended increasing surveillance (as cited in Murdock, 1999).

Teachers' assessment practices reveal that the majority of the questions asked on tests require only rote understanding. This corresponds to the two lowest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (Murdock, 1999; Silver& Kenny, 1995). Higher level questions, which include questions that emphasize strategies over solutions, may deter cheating. It is much easier to copy an answer than to copy another's reasoning. When complex problem-solving tasks are the focus, then the emphasis shifts away from performance of predetermined criteria, and reinforces the goal of learning (Murdock, 1999). If students are asked to solve problems or complete tasks that mirror the types of problems actually solved in their real world, they are more likely to see the value of working towards the solution. When students see the value of what they are doing, they are less likely to cheat (Murdock, 1999).

Since it was found that extrinsic motivation is more valued than intrinsic, educators need to place less emphasis on the extrinsic, and focus on the intrinsic. Students should not need to be rewarded for what is expected. They should want to do what is right in order to feel satisfaction in their accomplishments. According to Evans and Craig (1999), eliminating letter grades and the use of teacher reports that discuss what students have and have not learned would be the first step towards that goal.

Cheating can be discouraged or prevented when class sizes are small. This enables the teacher to work closely with students in a personal way. Evans and Craig also stated "that

teachers should increase their accessibility to students for more individualized help" (1999). They also reported a difference between students' and teachers' attitudes towards strategies for reducing or preventing cheating. Many students reported that cheating would decrease if academic standards are relaxed. Students feel it is necessary to cheat because they are feeling pressured by high academic standards. Teachers who emphasized situational tactics such as varying test formats, using essay type tests, and alternating forms of multiple -choice tests, found a reduction in cheating.

Project Objectives and Process

As a result of our intervention, during the period of September 2000 to November 2000, observable cheating in the targeted group would be significantly decreased as measured by teacher observation.

As a result of our intervention, during the period of September 2000 to November 2000, student attitudes toward cheating would be significantly changed as measured by post-survey results.

In order to accomplish the project objectives, the following processes were necessary:

1. The development of a baseline of observable cheating incidents and a baseline of student and teacher perceptions regarding cheating.
2. The development of and implementation of a series of activities that address the definition of cheating and its consequences.
3. Communication to the students, through the use of posters in the targeted classrooms, what exactly constitutes cheating and what the consequences will be.
4. The creation of materials that informed parents about cheating policies.

5. The development and implementation of a series of character education activities focusing on integrity and the importance of not cheating.

Project Action Plan

The researchers at the targeted sited addressed the increased incidents of cheating and students' attitudes towards cheating by implementing the following intervention processes.

I. The development of a baseline of observable cheating incidents.

A. Researchers completed an observation checklist to document incidents of cheating from September 11-15, 2000.

1. A checklist of observable cheating behaviors was created—Appendix C.
2. Students were observed during the given week.
3. Incidents of observable cheating were tallied.

II. The development of a baseline of students' and teachers' perceptions about cheating.

A. Researchers conducted individual surveys of students' and teachers' perceptions about cheating.

1. The surveys:
   a. teacher survey—Appendix A
   b. student survey—Appendix B
2. Surveys were distributed on September 18, 2000.
3. Completed surveys were collected from September 18-22, 2000.

4. Data was analyzed.

III. Activities addressing the definition of cheating and its consequences were implemented on September 20, 2000 during a 40 minute class period. Reinforcement was done five minutes daily from September 21-22, 2000. Any additional reinforcement was done as needed throughout the plan.

A. Activity using situations to initiate discussion about the definition of cheating were used.

1. Specific cheating situations were used to spur discussions.

2. Brainstorming additional cheating situations was done with classes.

B. The establishment of a clear definition of cheating.

1. A definition of cheating was illicited from whole-class discussion and a specific list of actions that are considered cheating was established.

2. Consequences for cheating were developed.

a. Targeted schools' policies regarding cheating were reviewed.

b. Classroom consequences for cheating were established.

IV. The definition and consequences of cheating were communicated to students and parents.

A. Students created posters that reflected the definition and consequences of cheating. Posters were displayed throughout targeted classrooms.

B. An informative letter based on student-generated definition and consequences regarding cheating as developed.

V. Character education activities that focused on integrity and the importance of not cheating were developed and presented over the five-week implementation period.

A. Cheating issues were role-played by students.

B. Processing of activities occurred through classroom discussion and through student journal writing.

By implementing this action plan, the researchers hoped to reduce observable incidents of cheating and change students' attitudes toward cheating.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, an observation checklist of observable cheating will be conducted and student surveys were re-administered. The data was compared and analyzed as part of the assessment process.

CHAPTER 4

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this Action Plan was to significantly decrease the incidents of observable cheating in the targeted classrooms and to significantly change student attitudes toward cheating. This Action Plan was designed to raise student awareness regarding the seriousness of cheating and to raise awareness of the growing problem of cheating. The Action Plan was also designed to raise awareness of the consequences of cheating. Implementation strategies included: developing a baseline of observable incidents of cheating, developing a baseline of students' and teachers' perceptions regarding cheating, developing a series of character education activities that focus on qualities related to cheating (e.g. integrity), and developing materials to raise awareness in the targeted groups on the definition of cheating, what constitutes cheating, and the seriousness of the consequences.

The Action Plan was placed into effect beginning September 2000. Surveys on teachers' and students' perceptions on cheating were developed and distributed to the targeted classes, their teachers, as well as to the ancillary staff members that provided instruction to these students. Results were compiled to develop a baseline on the students' and teachers' perceptions on cheating.

Researchers developed a checklist of a variety of observable cheating behaviors (Appendix C). During the week of September 11-15, 2000, each researcher tallied incidents of

observable cheating in the targeted classes. The results were compiled to develop a baseline of observable incidences of cheating.

Activities addressing the definition of cheating and its consequences were implemented during the following week during 45-minute class periods. Students were placed in cooperative groups which brainstormed and compiled a list of phrases and scenarios that represented cheating. A working definition of cheating was developed. Cheating was defined as "representing someone else's work as your own."

Activities that addressed the consequences of cheating were implemented. Students brainstormed and illustrated what cheating looks like, sounds like, and feels like through a variety of graphic organizers. Each of the targeted schools' policy regarding cheating was reviewed and placed in an area of importance in the targeted classrooms. Through discussions and brainstorming, each of the targeted classes developed consequences for cheating in their classrooms. An Anti-Cheating Campaign was created. Students created posters that reflected the definition of cheating and its consequences. These posters were placed in the targeted classrooms for the duration of the Action Plan.

Character education activities that focused on the importance of not cheating and qualities such as integrity were developed and implemented. Students used role-playing to act out a variety of scenarios that showed what cheating looked like. Class discussions were held to discuss reasons why some people cheat and the long-term effects on the individual and its consequences. Students discussed alternative solutions. In order to process the activities in the Action Plan, students were required to keep a journal and wrote reflections on the various

activities. Reinforcement activities were done for approximately five to ten minutes daily for an additional week. Additional reinforcement was completed as needed throughout the months of September and October.

At the conclusion of the Action Plan, students from the targeted classes were asked to complete the post-survey on their perceptions of cheating (Appendix B). The results were compiled and compared to the pre-intervention surveys. Results were analyzed.

Second, the researchers conducted a week-long post-observation, noting incidents of observable cheating using the same Observation Checklist (Appendix C) that was used prior to the intervention. Data was compiled and compared to the pre-intervention Observation Checklist. The results were analyzed.

During the implementation of the Action Plan, certain modifications were made in regard to one of the intervention strategies. Due to a targeted school's policy, it was not possible to send home letters regarding cheating and its consequences. Consequently, in lieu of the letters, the targeted schools' discipline codes regarding cheating were reviewed.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to collect and compare data before and after the intervention, some of the same assessments were used. A student survey was used to establish a baseline regarding student cheating and student attitude regarding cheating. This same survey was re-administered to the students to gauge whether student attitudes regarding cheating had changed due to the intervention. Also, the same observation checklist was used for one week prior to the intervention in order to document the number of cheating incidents occurring in the researchers'

classroom, was used for one week after the intervention to document whether observable cheating had declined.

The student surveys were used to gather a variety of information. First, the first five questions of the survey asked whether students cheated and in what circumstances they cheated. Figure 23 and Figure 24 compare pre-intervention and post-intervention survey results.

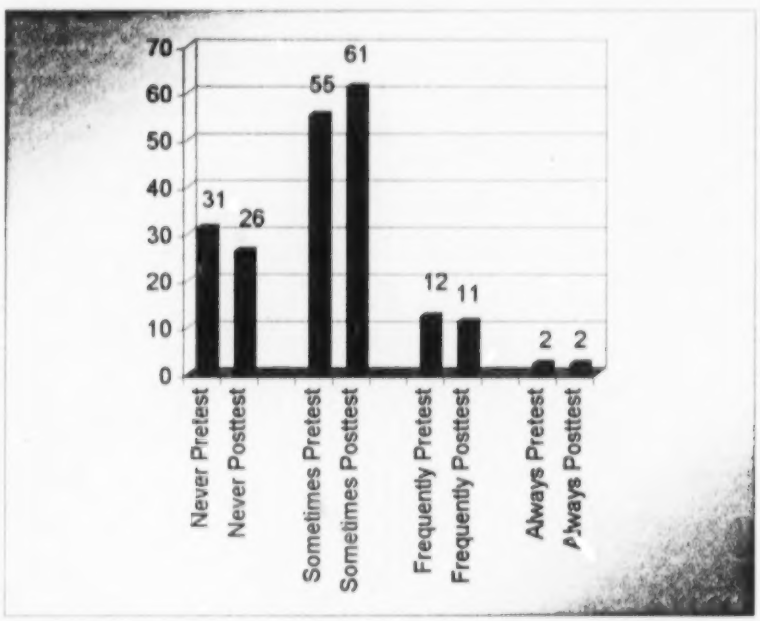

Figure 23. Comparison of pretest and posttest survey results regarding student perception about how often they cheat.

In comparing the pre-intervention and post-intervention survey results, Figure 23 illustrates that there was basically little or no change in how often students cheat. Prior to the intervention, 86% of students answered that they cheated either never or sometimes. This compares to 87% after the intervention, only a 1%.

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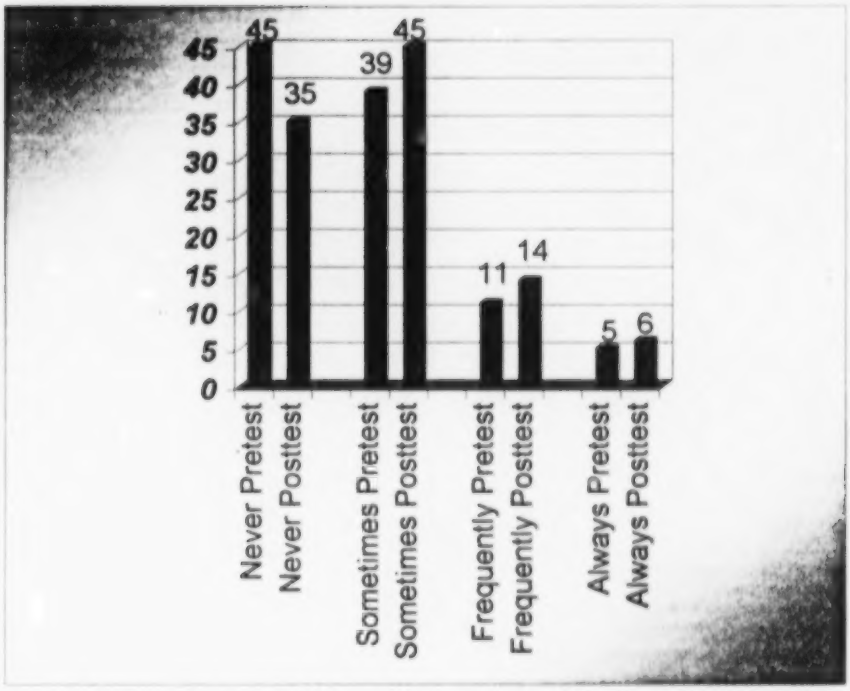

Figure 24. Comparison of pretest and posttest survey results regarding the percentage of students who copy class work from other students.

Figure 24 shows that before the intervention, 84% of students never or sometimes copied class work from other students, while post-intervention results show that number drops to 80%. So, according to survey results, more students are copying class work after the intervention.

Figure 25 and 26 illustrate survey results regarding students' attitude about the seriousness of cheating and their awareness of the consequences if they are caught cheating.

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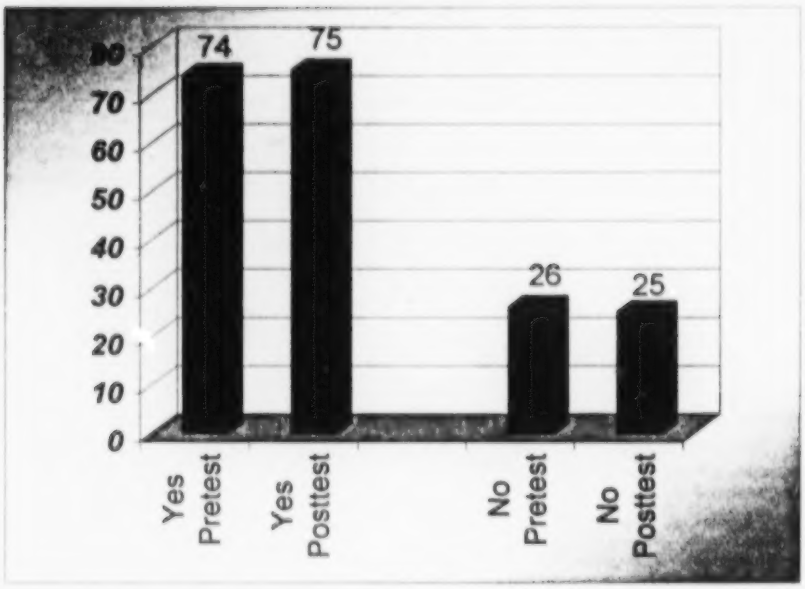

Figure 25. Comparison of pretest and posttest data regarding whether students believe that it is serious to cheat on tests.

Figure 25 illustrates the fact that prior to the intervention, slightly less than three-quarters of students felt that it was in fact serious to cheat on tests. This number stayed virtually the same in the post-intervention results. It seems that students have not changed their opinion regarding the seriousness of cheating, however, the majority of students did report feeling that it was wrong.

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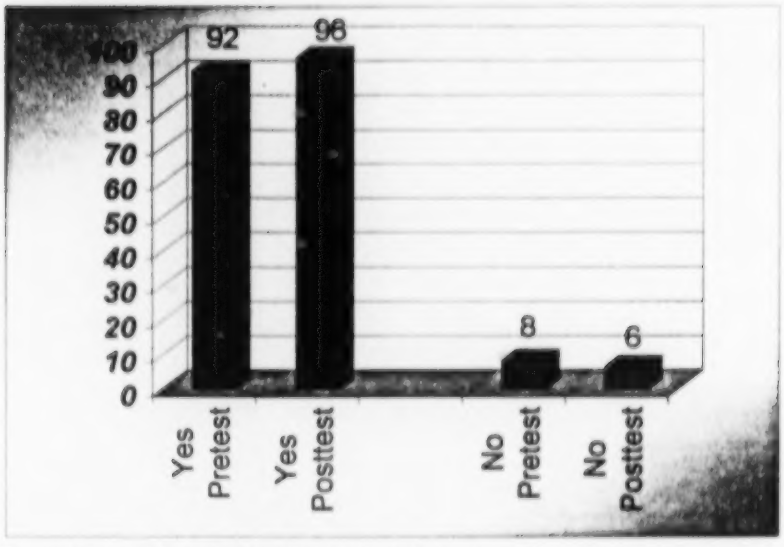

Figure 26. Comparison of pretest and posttest data regarding student awareness of consequences for cheating.

Figure 26 indicated that, prior to the intervention used in the Action Plan, 92% of students new what the consequences for cheating were. This number rose four percent after the intervention. This shows that nine out of ten students were aware of the consequences of cheating, but obviously they were willing to take the chance at getting caught from the data previously discussed.

In addition to assessing attitudinal changes, the researchers also used an observation checklist in order to develop a baseline concerning the number of actual incidences of cheating and the type of cheating that was occurring. The same observation checklist used pre-intervention was conducted daily for one school week after the intervention. The researchers simply kept a tally of the cheating that they witnessed in their classrooms. The observations were categorized into eleven different types of cheating. Figure 27 illustrates a comparison of

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the number of cheating incidents observed pre-intervention with the number observed post-intervention.

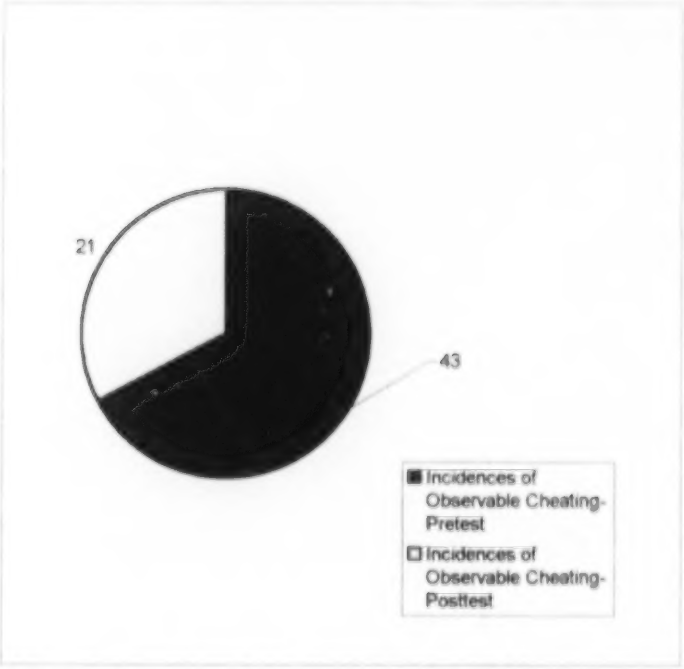

Figure 27. Comparison of number of incidents of cheating pre-intervention and post-intervention.

Figure 27 illustrates a dramatic decrease in the number of incidents of observable cheating in the researchers' classrooms. The number of incidents decreased by 22, from 43 to 21, a decrease of 51%.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Post-intervention data indicated that the incidents of observed cheating behaviors decreased significantly (over 50%) after the action plan was in place. Also the data indicated an

increase in the student awareness of the consequences of cheating. Post-intervention data also indicated that students are less likely to cheat when a clear definition of cheating is communicated, and the consequences are clearly stated and followed through.

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on observable cheating behaviors in the targeted classrooms, the students involved showed a marked improvement in behavior. The discussions and the role-play activities provided a clear understanding of what cheating was and addressed the confusion that is sometimes associated with students "just sharing." This brings up the question of whether the shift in educational practices toward a collaborative approach to learning in the cooperative learning classroom has made it more difficult to determine whether the students are actually cheating, or in fact, just cooperating. The researchers found that even among teachers who were surveyed, the definition of cheating was not clear; questions on what actually constitutes cheating were widespread. Students seem confused and consequently, it becomes difficult to accuse the student, when she may just not know better.

The researchers recommend the following for success in decreasing the amount of cheating in the classroom. First, the entire staff of teachers would need to be in agreement as to the definition and understanding of what actually constitutes cheating. Second, an agreement would need to be put in place, preferably in the discipline code, which would outline the definition and the consequences for those who are caught cheating. As one student commented on the post-survey, "There should be more severe consequences for cheating." Third, it is important to follow through with a character education program on the importance of honesty and integrity. This kind of effort should start as early as the primary grades and be repeated at the start of each new school year. According to another student, "All people cheat. At least once

in their life. If they think they won't get caught, they'll cheat." This illustrates the need to address the root of the problem, a lack of integrity.

Finally, the researchers found through this study and action plan that there was a wide latitude of cheating that has become accepted in the classroom. When the clear definition of cheating is taught, modeled and reinforced by teachers, practiced and understood by the students, and supported by the entire staff, the incidents of cheating will decrease.

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Appendix A

Survey of Teachers' Perceptions About Cheating

	NEVER	SELDOM	FREQUENTLY	ALWAYS
1. Students cheat.				
2. Students use cheat sheets when they take tests.				
3. Students copy answers from other students on tests.				
4. When students do not understand the assignment, they get answers from their friends.				
5. Students copy answers from other students when they do classwork.				

	YES	NO
6. Cheating is prevalent.		
7. Have you adjusted your teaching practices due to cheating? (multiple test copies, classroom arrangement, etc.)		
8. Have you discussed what constitutes cheating in your classroom?		
9. Have you discussed the consequences of cheating with your students?		
10. Do you follow through with the consequences when you observe students cheating? If no, why? _____ _____ _____		
11. Is there a school policy in place regarding cheating?		
12. Do you find that cooperative learning groups contributes to confusion about cheating?		

Any comments are appreciated: _____

Appendix A

To: Junior High Teachers

From: Researchers

Re: Survey of Cheating

I am in the process of collecting data for a research project. The project's objective is to gather information about student and teacher perceptions about cheating and ultimately reduce the incidents of cheating. My research partners and I have defined cheating as representing someone else's work as your own. I am asking that you please complete the following survey, by marking an "x" in the appropriate column. Your response is very valuable to my research and will be anonymous and confidential. I greatly appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey. Please return your completed survey to me no later than

_____.

Thank you,

Appendix B

Survey of Students' Perceptions About Cheating

	NEVER	SELDOM	FREQUENTLY	ALWAYS
1. I cheat.				
2. I use cheat sheets when I take tests.				
3. I copy answers from other students on tests.				
4. When I do not understand an assignment I get answers from my friends.				
5. I copy answers from other students when I do classwork.				

	YES	NO
6. Have you refused to cheat even though others were cheating?		
7. I would be willing to cheat on a test if it would help improve my grade.		
8. People who are willing to cheat are more likely to succeed than people who are not.		
9. My parents would rather I cheat than get bad grades.		
10. It is not worth it to cheat because it hurts your character.		
11. It is very serious to cheat on tests.		
12. It is very serious to cheat on classwork.		
13. If you were sure you would not get caught would you cheat.		
14. Are you aware of the consequences of cheating in the school?		

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Appendix C

Observation Checklist

This is checklist has been developed to record incidents of observable cheating in a given school week. Cheating has been defined as representing someone else's work as your own. A tally mark will be placed in the appropriate row for each incident of cheating observed by the researcher.

OBSERVED	CHEATING
Copying homework	
Copying another student's assignment	
Asking another student what was on a test	
Creating/using a cheat sheet	
Plagiarism	
Copying answers during a test	
Turning another student's work as your own	
Signaling during a test	
Obtaining test prior to test	
Changing answers or grades	
Looking at notes or book during test	

Appendix D

Saint Xavier University
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
"Academic Cheating in Adolescence"

Dear parent/guardian and student participant:

I am in the process of collecting data for a research project. The project's objective is to gather information about student and teacher perceptions about cheating that will ultimately reduce incidents of cheating. My research partners and I have defined cheating as representing someone else's work as your own. Your child will be asked to complete a survey. Anonymity and confidentiality is guaranteed. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your response is very valuable to my research and your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Please sign and return the consent form by _____.

Thank you,

I acknowledge that the investigator has explained to me the need for this research, identified the risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of this study. I freely and voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand all information gathered during the interview will be completely confidential (or anonymous). I also understand that I may keep a copy of the consent form for my own information.

_____ _____
Signature of Voluntary Participant Date

_____
Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian